



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

PART 130 FW 1	SUBJECT Education Student Educational Employment Program	RELEASE NUMBER 452
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Division of Human Resources		DATE August 9, 2004

EXPLANATION OF MATERIAL TRANSMITTED:

This chapter provides policy and guidance for implementing the Student Educational Employment Program within the Fish and Wildlife Service.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

Remove:

130 FW 1, 12/31/96, FWM 300

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1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides policy and guidance for implementing the Student Educational Employment Program within the Service.

1.2 To whom does this chapter apply? This chapter applies to all Student Educational Employment Program participants and their managers and supervisors.

1.3 What are the authorities for the Student Educational Employment Program?

A. Executive Order 12015.

B. 5 CFR 213.3202.

C. DOI Personnel Bulletin No. 02-05 (338), November 6, 2001.

1.4 Who is responsible for administering the Student Educational Employment Program?

A. The **Director** has responsibility for Servicewide direction of the Student Educational Employment Program.

B. The **Assistant Director-Budget, Planning, and Human Resources** has overall responsibility for effective administration of the program and for ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

C. **Regional Directors; Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO); Chief, Law Enforcement; and Assistant Directors** are responsible for planning, coordinating, implementing, and monitoring program activities within their areas of responsibility.

D. The **Chief, Division of Human Resources** is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the program within the Service.

E. The **Director, National Conservation Training Center** has responsibility for policy and procedures regarding Individual Development Plans.

F. The **Regional Human Resources Officers and Chiefs, Branches of Diversity and Civil Rights** are responsible for carrying out the policies and procedures of the program in accordance with agency directives and regulatory guidance within their respective Region/CNO.

G. **Managers and Supervisors** are responsible for identifying target positions for student conversions; notifying their servicing human resources office of changes in students' employment status; obtaining copies of students' transcripts to verify that students continue to meet eligibility criteria at the end of each quarter/semester; ensuring that SCEP students meet educational goals and that work

experiences are related to the students' major fields of study; developing Individual Development Plans for program participants; assigning mentors and orienting students to the Service; and monitoring students' performance and conduct.

1.5 What are the definitions for terms used in this chapter?

A. Accredited. An accredited institution or program is a secondary or post-secondary institution or program that is legally authorized to offer academic programs that lead to a diploma, certificate, or degree and is formally recognized by an accrediting agency listed as nationally recognized by the Secretary of Education.

B. Break in program. A break in program is a period of time when a program participant is working but is unable to go to school or is neither attending classes nor working at the Service. The Service may use its discretion to either approve or deny a break in program.

C. Student. A student, for purposes of the Service's Student Employment Program, is an individual who has:

(1) Been accepted for enrollment or who is enrolled as a degree (diploma, certificate, etc.) seeking student in an accredited high school, technical, or vocational school, 2-year or 4-year college or university, or graduate or professional school.

(2) Is taking at least a half-time academic/vocational/ or technical course load. (The definition of half-time is the definition provided by the school in which the student is enrolled.) Students need not be in actual physical attendance so long as all other requirements are met. An individual who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half an academic/vocational or technical course load in the class enrollment period immediately prior to graduating is still considered a student for purposes of the Student Educational Employment Program.

D. Student Educational Employment Program. The Student Educational Employment Program is an employment program that provides students with an opportunity to earn money and continue their education through training with people who manage the day-to-day business of the Federal Government by combining academic study with on-the-job experience. The Student Educational Employment Program has two components:

(1) **Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).** Students in the Student Temporary Employment Program may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year. There are no limitations on the number of hours they may work per week, but their work schedules should not interfere with their academic schedules. Students in this

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Program are appointed to positions not to exceed 1 year; however, appointments may be extended in 1-year increments as long as the individual meets the definition of a student. The nature of a student's duties does not have to be related to the student's academic/career goals. Students are not eligible for noncompetitive conversion to term, career, or career-conditional appointments, but they may be converted to the Student Career Experience Program. Students in the STEP program are not required to have a written agreement among themselves, the Service, and their educational institutions.

(2) Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). The Student Career Experience Program is a formally structured program that, before a student is employed, requires a written agreement that must be developed and signed by the student and by representatives of the Service and of the student's school, describing the nature of work assignments (which must be related to the student's academic/career goals); schedule of work assignments and class attendance; evaluation procedures; and requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program. There are no limitations on the number of hours students may work per week, but their work schedules should not interfere with their academic schedules. Appointments are subject to all of the conditions and requirements governing term, career, or career-conditional employment, including an investigation to establish an appointee's qualifications and suitability. Appointments of participants who have met all the requirements of the program may be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments at any time after satisfactory completion of the requirements for his/her diploma, certificate, or degree.

1.6 Are there any other considerations and eligibility requirements that apply to participants in the Student Educational Employment Program? Other considerations and eligibility requirements that apply to participants in the Student Educational Employment Program are:

A. Student. The participant must meet the definition of a "student" as described in paragraph 1.5C above. Students enrolling in GED courses and pursuing a GED diploma are included in the definition of a student. Due to the general nature of the coursework, the student might not be eligible for the Student Career Experience Program but would be eligible for the Student Temporary Employment Program.

B. Citizenship. The Service may appoint a noncitizen provided that the student is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or otherwise authorized to be employed and provided that the Service is authorized to pay aliens under the annual appropriations act ban and any Department- or Service-specific enabling and appropriation statutes.

C. Age. The student must be at least 16 years of age.

D. Financial need/minimum academic requirements. Federal agencies are authorized to impose criteria for financial need or minimum academic requirements. However, the Service's policy is not to establish any criteria that could reduce the pool of potential participants in the Student Educational Employment Program.

E. Relatives. Students may work with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the Service. Therefore sons or daughters of Service employees may participate in the Student Educational Employment Program, subject to the requirement in the preceding sentence.

1.7 What type of appointment do students in the Student Educational Employment Program receive? All students in the Student Educational Employment Program (whether STEP or SCEP) receive Schedule B, excepted service, appointments. Students are appointed to positions not to exceed 1 year. Appointments may be extended in 1-year increments as long as the individual meets the definition of a student as described in paragraph 1.5C above.

1.8 How are Student Educational Employment Program jobs classified? Classification of Student Educational Employment Program jobs within the Service is based on the occupational series for which students are hired. Grade levels are set according to the criteria in the appropriate General Schedule (GS) or Wage Grade (WG) classification standard. Refer also to DOI Personnel Bulletin No. 02-05 (338). SCEP students appointed to General Schedule (GS) positions are classified as student trainees in the X99 series for the appropriate occupational group.

1.9 Do students in the Student Educational Employment Program count against FTE ceilings? Students in the Student Educational Employment Program do count against FTE ceilings. See OMB Circular No. A-11, Section 32.3(b).

1.10 Are students in the Student Educational Employment Program eligible for promotions? Students in the Student Educational Employment Program are eligible for promotions. Promotions should be documented as a conversion to another excepted appointment, citing the same authority for the original appointment and maintaining the original not-to-exceed (NTE) date.

1.11 Do students in the Student Educational Employment Program earn annual and sick leave? Students in the Student Educational Employment Program earn both annual and sick leave.

1.12 Do students in the Student Educational Employment Program have retirement coverage? Students in the Student Temporary Employment Program

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are generally ineligible for retirement coverage. Refer to 5 CFR 831.201 and 842.105 for specific information. Students in the Student Career Experience Program, with no prior service or with less than 5 years of prior civilian service, are generally covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Refer to 5 CFR 842.

1.13 Are students in the Student Educational Employment Program eligible for life insurance and health benefits coverage? For regulations regarding life insurance and health benefits coverage, refer to 5 CFR 870.202, 890.102, and 890.502.

1.14 Can the Service pay for training expenses for students in the Student Educational Employment Program? The Service can pay for all or part of training expenses directly related to students' official duties.

1.15 Can the Service provide travel and transportation? For SCEP students, the Service can pay for expenses directly related to training, such as travel and transportation between duty station and school. The Service should also pay for lodging expenses for SCEP students, as a necessary training expense.

1.16 What are the Service's training requirements for SCEP students? The Service requires an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for each student within 30 days of the date the student enters into the position. The IDP should take into account the student's career interests as well as the program needs. In addition, each student should have a mentor assigned to him or her, who will serve as the student's on-the-job trainer and coach, and should receive a Service orientation session.

1.17 How many times can I appoint a student to the Student Temporary Employment Program or the Student Career Experience Program? You may appoint a student to either program as long as the student meets the eligibility requirements for the appointment.

1.18 Can students' appointments in the Student Educational Employment Program be converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments? Students in the STEP component of the Students Educational Employment Program are not eligible for noncompetitive conversion to term, career, or career-conditional appointments. Their appointments may be converted to appointments in the Student Career Experience Program. Students in the SCEP component who have met all the requirements of the program may be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments at any time within 120 days after satisfactory completion of the requirements for their diplomas, certificates, or degrees.

1.19 What are the program requirements for noncompetitive conversion of students' appointments in the SCEP component of the Student Educational Employment Program to term, career, or career-conditional appointments? The program requirements for noncompetitive conversion of students' appointments in the SCEP component are:

A. U.S. citizenship.

B. Completion within the preceding 120 days at an accredited school, course requirements conferring a diploma, certificate, or degree.

C. Completion of at least 640 hours of career-related work before completion of, or concurrently with, the course requirements.

D. Satisfactory job performance and recommendation by the Service employing office in which the career-related work was performed.

E. Having met the qualification standards for the targeted position to which the student will be appointed.

F. Conversion must be to an occupation related to the student's academic training and career related work experience.

1.20 Can work experience gained while under STEP be credited toward the 640-hour work experience necessary for noncompetitive conversion to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment? Work experience gained while under STEP can be credited toward the 640-hour work experience necessary for a SCEP noncompetitive conversion to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment provided that the work experience is career-related. The employing office should clearly document how the work is career-related in terms of duties, tasks, assignments, etc.

1.21 If a SCEP student's appointment is noncompetitively converted to a term appointment, can the Service later convert the student's appointment to a career or career-conditional appointment? If a SCEP student's appointment is noncompetitively converted to a term appointment, the Service can later convert that appointment to a career or career-conditional appointment before the term appointment expires.

1.22 Are students in the Student Educational Employment Program eligible for promotion? Students in both components of the Student Educational Employment Program are eligible for promotion as follows:

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A. STEP. Promotions for students in the STEP should be documented as a conversion to another excepted appointment at a higher grade level, citing the same authority used for the original appointment and maintaining the original not-to-exceed date. Even though the actual nature of the action is a conversion to a new appointment, a GS employee is entitled to an increase in pay of at least two steps upon placement in a higher-graded position without a break in service. Noncompetitive conversions are excluded from time-in-grade restrictions by 5 CFR 300.603(b)(2). Upon promotion, a WG employee is entitled to an increase in pay of at least one step.

B. SCEP. Promotions for students in the SCEP to the next higher level are permissible when the student meets all of the qualification standards described in either the OPM Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions or in DOI Personnel Bulletin No. 02-05 (338).

1.23 Can work experience in the STEP component of the Student Educational Employment Program count toward the 640-hour work experience necessary for noncompetitive conversion to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment? Work experience that is related to the student's academic program and career goals, gained while in the Student Temporary Employment Program, may be credited toward the 640-hour work experience requirement for noncompetitive conversion to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment.

1.24 Must a Student Educational Employment Program participant take any OPM qualification tests? OPM qualification tests are waived for Student Educational Employment Program participants.

1.25 Are students eligible for within-grade increases? For STEP students, eligibility for within-grade increases depends on the pay system of the occupation. Temporary Wage Grade (WG) employees are eligible for within-grade increases. Temporary General Schedule (GS) employees are not eligible for within-grade increases.

1.26 Does veteran's preference apply to the selection of students for the Student Educational Employment Program? Veteran's preference applies to the selection of students for the Student Educational Employment program.

1.27 Are there any reporting requirements? Employing offices must submit reports on Student Educational Employment Program accomplishments and activities to the Chief, Division of Human Resources, for inclusion in the Quarterly Diversity Accomplishment Report.

1.28 How is the Student Educational Employment Program publicized? The Regions/CNO are responsible for publicizing the Student Educational Employment

Program; however, all publications (i.e., brochures, handouts, pamphlets, etc.) related to the Program must be submitted for approval to the Chief, Division of Human Resources prior to publication.

1.29 Must positions in the Student Educational Employment Program be advertised? The Student Educational Employment Program offers a direct hire option; therefore, vacancy announcements are not required.

1.30 What are the work schedule requirements for students in the program? The work schedule requirements for students in the program are:

A. STEP. Students in the Student Temporary Employment Program may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year. There are no limitations on the number of hours students may work per week, but their work schedules should not interfere with their academic schedules. An intermittent schedule is only appropriate when the nature of the work is so sporadic and unpredictable that a regular tour of duty cannot be scheduled in advance. The intent of the Student Temporary Employment Program is not to have students work in these types of schedules. The Service has discretion to approve or deny a break in program. Regions/CNO must balance the best interests of the student with the best interests of the Service in making decisions about breaks in program.

B. SCEP. Students in the Student Career Experience Program may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year. There are no limitations on the number of hours students may work per week, but their work schedules should not interfere with their academic schedules. The SCEP students' schedules of work assignments and class attendance must be included in the written agreement described in paragraph 1.5D(2). The Service has discretion to approve or deny a break in program. Regions/CNO must balance the best interests of the student with the best interests of the Service in making decisions about breaks in program.

1.31 Are students in the program eligible for awards? Students are eligible for awards under the Service's Awards and Recognition Program.

1.32 Are students in the program covered by the Service's Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Policy and Entitlements? 266 FW 1 applies to new employees, including student trainees, assigned to their first duty station.

1.33 Can the Service offer students tuition assistance? The Service may offer SCEP students tuition assistance for courses in a field of study directly related to their official duties.

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1.34 Must SCEP students have written performance plans? SCEP students must have written performance plans and must receive performance evaluations. For work periods of less than 90 days, a progress report may be substituted for a performance appraisal.

1.35 How long may an appointment last after a student has completed the educational requirements for his or her diploma, certificate, or degree? Appointments may last as follows:

A. STEP. STEP student appointments may be extended in 1-year increments as long as the individual is a student as defined by paragraph 1.5C above. STEP students who have completed their education requirements for a diploma, certificate, or degree or are no longer students must be separated even if the not-to-exceed date of their current appointment has not been reached.

B. SCEP. SCEP students who have completed the education requirements for a diploma, certificate, or degree may continue working under their appointment for up to 120 days beyond completion of their education requirements.

C. Additional education program. Both STEP and SCEP students may be given a new appointment if they are enrolled or are accepted for enrollment in an additional education program.

1.36 When must employing offices inform SCEP students of the location of a position under a noncompetitive conversion? The employing office must inform SCEP students of the location of a position under a noncompetitive conversion at least 90 days prior to the student's expected date of graduation.

1.37 Who is responsible for converting SCEP students to a career or career-conditional appointment? The offices that initially hire SCEP students are responsible for identifying the positions to which SCEP students are to be converted.

1.38 Can SCEP students be noncompetitively converted from a term appointment to a career or career-conditional appointment? SCEP students who have been noncompetitively converted to term appointments may also be noncompetitively converted to career or career-conditional appointments prior to expiration of their term appointments.

1.39 May SCEP students select their duty stations upon conversion? Students may not select their duty stations upon conversion; job offers are based on the availability of positions and are limited to the duty stations of such positions.

1.40 When does the 120-day conversion window begin? The 120-day conversion window begins upon completion of the program requirements for the diploma, certificate, or degree, rather than upon the date of graduation.

1.41 May a SCEP student work any of the 640 hours of career-related work required by conversion after completion of educational requirements? The student must complete the required 640 hours before completion of, or concurrently with, the educational requirements.

1.42 What happens to a SCEP student if he or she has not been converted at the end of the 120-day conversion window? If a SCEP student has not been converted to a position in the competitive service prior to expiration of the 120-day conversion window, he or she must be separated from the Service.

1.43 May a SCEP student be considered for conversion to a permanent position in another Service program? A SCEP student may be placed in another Service program if both program managers agree.

1.44 Can the Service hire (convert) a graduating SCEP student who worked, while on the student appointment, for another agency? As long as the SCEP student meets the qualification standard for the position as well as the eligibility requirements for conversion, the Service can hire (convert) the student within 120 days of the date the student completes the program requirements for a diploma, certificate, or degree.

1.45 Does a SCEP student have to complete a 1-year probationary period? The student must complete a 1-year probationary period once he or she has been appointed to a permanent career or career-conditional position. However, SCEP work experience is creditable toward the 1-year period provided that the work experience is for the Service and is in the same line of work and contains or is followed by no more than a single break in service that does not exceed 30 calendar days. "Same line of work" means that the positions are so similar that they require the same qualifications and would be in the same competitive level for reduction-in-force purposes. Leave without pay in excess of 22 work days is not creditable and extends the probationary period by an amount of time equal to the leave taken without pay.

1.46 For what reasons can a SCEP student be separated? The servicing Human Resources Office as well as the Division of Diversity and Civil Rights must be informed of any proposed action to separate a SCEP student on account of performance or conduct. A SCEP appointment may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

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A. Resignation.

B. Change in curriculum that would result in the student's inability to meet the qualification requirements for his or her position.

C. Suspension, expulsion, or withdrawal from his or her educational institution.

D. Unsatisfactory work performance or conduct.

E. Failure to maintain academic standards.

F. Inability of the program office to retain the student in the position; e.g., budget constraints, reduction-in-force.

1.47 What procedural and appeal rights are available to students in the Student Educational Employment Program who are proposed to be separated on account of their performance or conduct? Students in the program who are proposed to be separated on account of their performance or conduct have only the following procedural or appeal rights:

A. Preference eligible. Students who are preference eligible employees and who have completed 1 year of current, continuous service in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights required by 5 CFR 432 (Unacceptable Performance) or 5 CFR 752 (Misconduct). In addition, they have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

B. Nonpreference eligible. Nonpreference eligible students who have completed 1 year of current, continuous employment in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights but not the appeal rights in 5 CFR 432.